

Keeping America robust a healthy challenge for disease-control chief

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By Twila Van Leer

Deseret News medical writer

As patients go, Dr. James O. Mason has a big one.

Now head of the national Centers for Disease Control, the former Utah Health Department director is charged with keeping a finger on the pulse of the entire American population, guarding against disease and providing impetus for Americans to be responsible for their own well-being.

Mason left Utah last December to take over as director of the CDC after having served in the state department for more than four years. In a telephone interview from his Atlanta offices, he talked about the responsibilities of the national post and his aspirations for America's health.

Among his priorities is a more concentrated effort to address the health care needs of America's minority and ethnic groups. "They haven't enjoyed all the advantages of other Americans," he said, citing higher infant mortality rates and greater incidence of some diseases among blacks, Hispanics and other groups.

"We're working with states to identify local groups that need assistance and encouragement to enhance their health," Mason said. The federal agency will provide ex-



James O. Mason

pertise, organization and leadership to the states in developing programs to meet specific needs, he said.

The grass-roots approach is a Mason hallmark. As a Utah state department administrator, he also worked to bolster local health departments. It's part of a philosophy that the unit closest to the problem can do the best job of resolving it.

The CDC also is increasing its involvement in occupational health and safety and in preventive health programs, Mason said. The agency has responsibility for the National

Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, along with separate centers concerned with health promotion and education, environmental health, disease surveillance and epidemiology, professional development and training, and infectious diseases.

Mason's units have responsibility for implementing five of the 15 goals of the national health policy devised under the Carter administration and continued by the Reagan administration. They also are involved peripherally in aspects of the other 10 goals, he said.

The CDC has grown over a period of four decades, when its precursor agency was charged with finding a way to reduce America's death toll from malaria. (In World War II, deaths among military personnel in the camps located in the southeastern part of the country were as serious a problem as combat deaths, he said. By the time the war ended, the malaria scourge also had been controlled.)

With that success behind it, the organization was given new responsibilities in disease control, particularly vector-carried infections. The charge has been broadened through the years, with the most recent major reorganization in 1978.

See CENTERS on B-2

UP&L seeks boost

devices and to maintain its standing in the financial world that is its major source of capital.

Combine all of that with Utah's steady and significant growth rate and you have the need for a large rate increase, UP&L officials said. The alternative to a rate increase is a financially weak utility that could not respond to the demands of its customers.

Sign up and make your own telescope

Anyone interested in making a high-quality telescope at a cost of \$215 — about half the retail cost of a comparable one — has until Aug. 20 to sign up for a four-week class at the Hansen Planetarium, 15 S. State St.

The class will be limited to 10 participants, who must preregister and pay the \$215 by Aug. 20. The telescopes will be assembled during three Saturday morning sessions beginning Sept. 8 at 10 a.m. A fourth evening session will be scheduled to learn to use them.

Instructors will be Bruce Crim, an experienced telescope maker and board member of the Salt Lake Astronomical Society, and Patrick Wiggins, education specialist at the planetarium. A telescope like those to be made is on display in the planetarium's lobby. For more information call Wiggins at 535-7199.

and large industries will fire their salvos.

Friday has been set aside to hear the general public's views. The public hearing will begin at 10 a.m. in the fourth floor of the Heber M. Wells state office building, 160 E. Third South.

The largest state agency to take part in the case, the Division of Public Utilities, has announced it will oppose much of UP&L's request on two basic points.

First, UP&L is asking the PSC to allow the company to make a larger profit. UP&L wants its authorized rate of return raised from 15.5 percent to 15.8 percent. The division, however, would like to see that rate lowered to 14.25 percent.

Division officials also have expressed concern about the accuracy of UP&L's forecasts of how business will be in coming months. Division officials have testified that UP&L consistently has overpredicted expenses and underpredicted revenues in the past.

Based on its calculations, the division is expected to recommend a \$39.6 million rate increase for UP&L — just \$6.6 million more than already granted in the interim hearings.

UP&L is holding fast to its request, though. In addition to meeting the burdens of inflation and Hunter 3, the company said it must have more funds to install environmental control

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